

Date: April 24, 2003

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact: Nancy Jackson, Department of Information Services, 360-902-3558; cell, 360-280-7526; e-mail, <mailto:nancyj@dis.wa.gov>

Glenn Cramer, Washington State Patrol, 360-753-5299; e-mail, gcramer@wsp.wa.gov

State of Washington announces pilot project to test feasibility of a multi-state AMBER Alert Web portal

OLYMPIA, Wash. -- The state of Washington today announced plans for a pilot project to test the viability of a multi-state AMBER Alert Web portal, offering a single location from which the media, law enforcement and the public can obtain current AMBER Alerts on abducted children, regardless of the jurisdiction posting the information. The Washington State Department of Information Services, the Washington State Patrol, the state's Emergency Management Division, the Washington State Department of Transportation, the Washington State Association of Broadcasters, the Washington Association of Sheriffs and Police Chiefs, and E2C (Engaging & Empowering Citizenship)/Earth 911 created the strategic partnership to develop the pilot project.

"This is a terrific concept," said Gov. Gary Locke. "The Internet may be a great tool to help reunite children taken from their families. I look forward to seeing the final results of this pilot project."

"Currently there is no single place for the public and law enforcement to go to receive information about AMBER Alerts from multiple jurisdictions," said DIS Director Stuart McKee.

"This pilot will allow us to develop a single electronic interface that will provide users with an intuitive and easy-to-use navigation system with AMBER Alert information from multiple states, cities and counties. We need to do all we can to protect children."

Under Washington state's current AMBER Alert plan, unveiled by Locke last October, the Washington State Patrol acts as the main point of contact for local law enforcement agencies wanting to broadcast their local child abduction information statewide through the state's Emergency Alert System. The state's Emergency Management Division coordinates and operates the alert system.

-- more --

The pilot – designed to be complete in 90 days - seeks to enhance the current AMBER Alert plan by allowing local law enforcement in cities and states to post up-to-date information about an abducted child to a single AMBER Alert Web portal. The portal will use a geographic information system to provide map-based search capabilities, and convey location-based information to the public. Law enforcement, media and citizens will have the option to choose to be notified of alerts and status updates via e-mail, fax or phone, or other Web service notification methods such as paging or personal digital assistant. Information on the portal can be displayed in visual, text or audio format, for both local and extended areas.

"The Washington State Patrol is pleased to be a partner with DIS, E2C and EMD in enhancing the effectiveness of the AMBER Alert system in our state," said WSP Chief Ronal Serpas. "Protecting our children from harm is the goal of this system and we strive to make it as effective and efficient as possible."

"Broadcasters are pleased to join in this pilot project, which will provide more timely information for stations to broadcast in an AMBER Alert, further enhancing the service Washington's radio and television stations provide to their communities," said Mark Allen, president and CEO of the Washington State Association of Broadcasters.

Oregon, Idaho, British Columbia, the Partnership for Public Warning, and ESRI, a geographic information system company, will also participate in the pilot project.

For more information on the pilot project, visit the AMBER Alert pilot project Web page on the DIS Web site, at <http://www.wa.gov/dis/AMBERAlertpilot/>.

###

Broadcast version

The state of Washington today announced plans for a pilot project to test the viability of a multi-state AMBER Alert Web portal. The state's AMBER Alert plan - unveiled by Governor Gary Locke last year - allows law enforcement agencies to use the state's emergency alert system to

broadcast information about abducted children statewide. The pilot project seeks to enhance the current AMBER Alert plan by allowing local law enforcement in cities and states to post up-to-date information about an abducted child to a single AMBER Alert Web portal.

A number of state agencies including the Washington State Patrol, the Department of Transportation, the Department of Information Services and the state's Emergency Management Division, along with the Washington State Association of Broadcasters, the Washington Association of Sheriffs and Police Chiefs, and E2C (Engaging & Empowering Citizenship)/Earth 911 developed the pilot project. Oregon, Idaho, British Columbia, the Partnership for Public Warning, and ESRI - a geographic information system company - will also participate in the pilot project.